

## **Award Winning Programs and Projects**

The city of Arvada has been awarded ICMA's International Award. Arvada's City Manager, Craig Kocian, stated "This award really belongs to the myriad of volunteers who populate our sister cities group, to staff who support their efforts, and to our elected officials who provide funding and their own time to make this effort successful."

Building a world-wide community to achieve a better understanding of the Islamic world became the vision of the city of Arvada, Colorado (pop.103,000) after the events of September 11, 2001.

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In 2002, Arvada's Council unanimously approved to establish a relationship with Kyzylorda, a city with an estimated population of 200,000 in western Kazakhstan. To provide additional support for this relationship the city created a non-profit corporation called Arvada Sister Cities International.

In addition, in September the Sister Cities International (SCI) awarded approximately \$40,000 to four sister city communities. Among the participating communities were Arvada and Kyzylorda. These funds would enable U. S. cities to create support emergency preparedness programs with their counterparts in the Islamic Region. The program would include four reciprocal visits by the city and sister city.

In the fall of that same year, the sister-city relationship was formalized at a ceremony in Kyzylorda. During this time, the emergency preparedness team conducted training in the Citizen Emergency Response Team and Incident Command System models of crisis management. This involved the medical, law enforcement, educational, fire and rescue, and governmental sectors of the city in a two-day training program, using training materials that Arvada volunteers translated into Russian.

Forty Kyzylorda professionals were trained, in turn, they would be training over 200 students and citizens in emergency preparedness.

In March 2003, officials from Kyzylorda visited Arvada. A citywide concert was held to raise money for children around the world that are still threatened by the active polio virus. During this visit, the officials attended the National League of Cities Congress of Cities in Washington, D. C., where presentations on the project were made to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of State, the Embassy of Kkazakhstan, and SCI.

In July 2003, Kazak officials revisited Arvada and attended the SCI conference in St. Louis, Missouri. Three conference sessions focused on the lessons learned from the two cities' training partnership.

On the fourth visit, in the fall of 2003, the Arvada delegation presented Kyzylorda with a defibrillator and spent time visiting the medical facilities. It was realized that the medical facilities could use improvement, which led to a new chapter in the sister-city relationship.

The visits have been oriented to and successful at, the building of formal and informal relationships. Folks from here are in Kyzylorda right now with more medical equipment and supplies, and to plan the purposes of our next exchange.”

With the support of Arvada Sister Cities International, the Arvada Chamber of Commerce, the Arvada Sunrise Rotary and Almaty (Kazakhstan) Rotary Clubs, Project C.U.R.E., and churches, businesses, and civic clubs, these groups have raised millions of dollars to aid the medical community.

Mr. Kocian witnessed the special partnership grow, but he said that the volunteers are the strength of a people-to-people program that is having a lasting effect on how widely disparate cultures may find common interests and values. Working together on common tasks makes all the difference.

“As we speak, Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda are in the midst of a threshold national election,” said Mr. Kocian. “we are poised to renew our efforts with the new leadership or a re-elected leadership and with the people of Kyzylorda.